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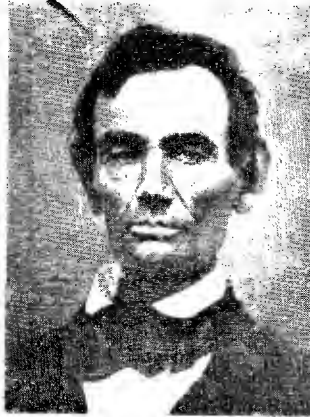


Caracas, Khrushchev in the kitchen, and the 1960 campaign. They afford neat compartments into which Nixon on the author manages to stuff the details of Nixon the politician's rise to world renown and then, by a fantastically narrow margin, his failure to win the Presidency. Using the crisis as a literary device permits Nixon to describe the way a leader thinks and acts during "challenge and tension . . . victory and defeat." One feels sometimes that this was meant to be a how-to book for succeeding generations of politicians.

But Mr. Nixon is not about to withdraw from practice to theory. On the final page he says, "For me, the evening of my life has not yet come," and, by way of proving it, he goes on at some length about his decision to become candidate for governor of California. As he makes quite clear, he has "drunk too deeply of the stuff which really makes life exciting and worth living to be satisfied with the froth."

Much of the book, of course, is recent history told as a highly partisan protagonist would like to have it recorded. Yet it is told with a great deal of restraint considering how differently some of the same episodes have been described elsewhere—and, indeed, by Mr. Nixon himself during the campaign. He is charitable to those who failed to see through Alger Hiss as quickly as did the freshman California congressman, only thirty-five years old at the time. Nor is Mr. Nixon excessively vindictive toward those who made an issue of his fund, which almost led to his removal as Vice-Presidential nominee in 1952. He duly records that in the opinion of some advisers his behavior in the Hiss case and the "Checkers" speech made him "controversial" and possibly contributed to his defeat in November, 1960. But he also notes philosophically that these two crises greatly contributed to make him a candidate for President.

In the recital of crises involving Eisenhower's illness as well as during the trips to Latin America and Russia, there is meticulous concern to record each emotion, each temptation to give way to anger, despair, or just plain fatigue. We are constantly shown the picture of the author refusing to yield to what he calls the



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"crisis syndrome." And he never fails to record the approval of on-lookers such as the Congressional Medal of Honor winner who after Caracas said that the Vice-President should really be wearing the ribbon.

In many ways, the book might serve as a legitimate campaign document for a still ambitious politician. But there is more to it than that. There is, for example, the not too thinly veiled account of the peculiar relationship that existed between Nixon and Eisenhower. Even now, Nixon seems puzzled by the rebuffs he received from the man who chose him as running mate. Only minutes before broadcast time in 1952, Dewey telephoned Nixon, obviously with Eisenhower's foreknowledge, to relay the consensus of the top command that Nixon should withdraw. In 1956 Eisenhower caused him "private agonizing" over whether he would be dumped as Vice-President. Even after the campaign began in 1960, the President answered facetiously a press-conference question about what major decisions Nixon had participated in. Eisenhower's retort, "If you give me a week, I might think of one," continued "to plague

me the rest of the campaign." Though Nixon strives manfully to show equanimity in telling about these and numerous other crises involving fellow Republicans like Stassen, Rockefeller, and Sherman Adams, one gets the feeling that some bitterness remains. At one point he remarks of Alger Hiss: "[He] was learning what many people in politics had learned before him: those he thought were his best friends turned out to be the heaviest cross he had to bear."

Possibly for this very reason he shows no trace of bitterness toward Kennedy. Again Nixon meticulously explains all the difficulties of the 1960 campaign: how his heavy beard had projected badly on television, how Kennedy associates exploited the religious issue, how the White House, according to this version of the story, refused to instruct the Justice Department to look into Martin Luther King's arrest in Georgia ("Had the recommendation been adopted, the whole incident might have resulted in a plus rather than a minus as far as I was concerned").

Nixon claims that he got mad at

his opponent only once. This was when he was told, mistakenly it has since turned out, that Kennedy had been briefed about the secret CIA mission to overthrow Castro before he publicly called for such a mission. Yet Nixon's response, even in the hindsight he provides, was a curiously disingenuous one. Claiming he had to protect the covert operation "at all costs," he condemned Kennedy's recommendation as "an open invitation for Mr. Khrushchev . . . to come into Latin America and to engage us in what would be a civil war and possibly even worse than that."

SELDOM has an American politician imposed so much self-analysis on the reading electorate. Possibly, as Nixon indicates over and over in the book, he has derived strength from all this introspection, through the detailed examination of the crisis syndrome and how it can be endured. But it may not be wise for a politician to make his inner life available for public inspection. As a people, we have traditionally preferred our leaders to be more discreet and restrained about revealing what they think of themselves.

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